

- Rep. John Hall Attends White House Bill Signing -
- Historic Legislation will Provide Advanced Appropriations for the VA -

Washington, DC – President Barack Obama today signed historic legislation co-sponsored by U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-Dover) that will provide advanced appropriations for veterans' health care. H.R. 1016, the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act, provides funding one year in advance for veterans medical programs. Funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been historically late in reaching its many critical programs.

"The budget for the VA has been passed late for nineteen of the last twenty years," said Hall, who was at the White House for the historic bill signing today. "This is an unacceptable situation that has forced the VA to ration healthcare to veterans. Passing advanced appropriations for veterans' health care into law ensures that budget delays will not allow the quality care veterans deserve to be compromised. The VA will now have up to one year to plan how to deliver the most efficient and effective care to an increasing number of veterans with increasingly complex medical conditions."

H.R. 1016 authorizes Congress to approve the VA's medical care appropriations one year in advance of the start of each fiscal year. Additionally, the VA will be required to detail estimates in the budget documents it submits annually to Congress. Each July, the VA will be required to report to Congress if it has the resources it needs for the upcoming fiscal year in order for Congress to address any funding imbalances. This will help to safeguard against the VA facing budget shortfalls such as it faced just a few years ago.

Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and Executive Director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), "Today, the President's signature transformed VA care for America's veterans forever. At the signing, I witnessed the President put an end to the rationing of care for our country's veterans, even when Congress fails to deliver the VA budget on time. This is a historic investment in the future of veterans' health care that will benefit millions of American heroes. Advance Funding has been the goal of veteran service organizations for over two decades. Working together, we were able to achieve this landmark legislation. IAVA thanks the President for his leadership and Congress for their continued support of this issue for our nation's veterans."

In a letter sent by eleven veteran service organizations to Congressman Hall and Members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, a vote for H.R. 1016 "will be among the most important for veterans and their families that the Committee will take this year."

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